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Reading Neighborhood Character : A Semiotic Analysis of Three Portland, Oregon Neighborhoods

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THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Jodi Hanson Tanner for the Master of Urban Studies were

presented May 30, 1997, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Jodi Hanson Tanner for the Master of Urban Studies presented May 30, 1997.

Title: Reading Neighborhood Character: A Semiotic Analysis of Three Portland, Oregon Neighborhoods.

The character of a neighborhood is demonstrated through environmental cues that tell the casual passerby about a neighborhood and its residents, including such aspects as privacy, neighboring, and wealth. Neighborhoods may be made up of residents all speaking the same message, such as exclusivity or independence; these neighborhoods give coherent messages and have strong identifiable character. Other neighborhoods may seem fragmented or have unclear character because the residential make-up is changing over time. Residents reflect aspects of themselves through the physical surroundings that make up a neighborhood.

This study examines three neighborhoods in a preliminary effort to identify which characteristics convey neighborhood character. The neighborhoods were chosen to include one wealthy, relatively liberal neighborhood, one working class neighborhood, and one neighborhood in transition. The character of these neighborhoods was established using archival data, including newspaper articles and 1990 U.S. Census data, and by cataloguing the types and mix of non-residential uses. Field research was undertaken to catalogue house-front and landscape elements by neighborhood. Within each neighborhood a random sample of streets was selected, totaling at least 50 houses observed per neighborhood. In addition, the neighborhood as a whole was driven through to form an overall impression of residential areas and mix of uses.

These observations are given along with likely messages conveyed by residents. The observations, connected with the archival findings on the character of the neighborhoods culminate in an interpretation of neighborhood character as manifested in these three neighborhoods.

The elements examined in this paper include property line indicators (borders), vegetation, vehicles, landscaping, seating, and house colors. Aspects of these elements, such as frequency or type, provided the bulk of differences found between neighborhoods. The differences between neighborhoods is interpreted to reflect differences in socio-economic status, concerns regarding privacy, and the importance of neighboring.

READING NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER:

A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THREE

PORTLAND, OREGON NEIGHBORHOODS

by

JODI HANSON TANNER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF URBAN STUDIES

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1997

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

How do our houses and yards speak the character of our neighborhoods for others to see and understand? This thesis examines the environmental cues that tell the casual passerby about a neighborhood and its residents, including such aspects as privacy, neighboring, and wealth. Neighborhoods may be made up of residents all speaking the same message, such as exclusivity or independence; these neighborhoods give coherent messages and have strong identifiable character. Other neighborhoods may seem fragmented or have unclear character because the residential make-up is changing over time. Residents reflect aspects of themselves in the physical surroundings that make up a neighborhood.

One's values, lifestyles, and financial status all affect the choices one makes in home purchases and later choices in landscaping and home presentation. The choices one makes about one's surroundings reflect one's tastes, which in turn are a reflection of identity. Reversed, this statement suggests that we can learn a great deal about a person by their surroundings. And since people cluster in neighborhoods with others of similar characteristics, the neighborhood as a whole takes on the character of its residents.

This study examines three neighborhoods in a preliminary effort to identify characteristics that demonstrate neighborhood character. The neighborhoods were chosen to include one wealthy, relatively liberal neighborhood, one working class Democratic neighborhood, and one neighborhood in transition. The character of these neighborhoods was established using archival data, including newspaper articles and Census data, and by cataloguing the types and mix of non-residential uses within the

neighborhood. Field research was then undertaken to catalogue house-front and landscape elements by neighborhood. The elements examined in the environment were all semi-fixed features, or features which can be changed but tend to remain stable over time. These elements were chosen because they are variable enough that the residents have some control over them, unlike a fixed feature such as house style. Semi-fixed features also are stable enough that they are able to convey a continuous message, unlike non-fixed feature elements, such as toys on the sidewalk in front of a house.

The elements examined in this paper include property line indicators (borders), vegetation, vehicles, landscaping, seating, and house colors. Aspects of these elements, such as frequency or type, provided the bulk of differences found between neighborhoods. Some elements were found to convey messages more clearly than others.

The research was performed in a qualitative manner, allowing the characteristics that varied by neighborhood to emerge through repeated observation. As such, this study acts more as a case study of three neighborhoods with their character and composite elements than as a demonstration of generalizable fact across all places and times. Within each neighborhood a random sample of streets was selected, totaling at least 50 houses observed per neighborhood. In addition, the neighborhood as a whole was driven through street-by-street or every other street. This drive through was used to form an overall impression of residential areas and mix of uses. These observations are given along with likely messages conveyed by residents. The observations, connected with the archival findings on the character of the neighborhoods, culminate in an interpretation of neighborhood character as manifested in these three neighborhoods. The analysis of data uses a semiotic framework, considering the semi-fixed elements observed as signs, both indexical and symbolic, that signify meanings.

CHAPTER II

THE EXISTENCE OF NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

This study investigates neighborhood character as manifested in the built environment. The conceptual underpinnings for my understanding that neighborhood character is reflected in and reinforced by home facade and front yard characteristics include the following:

A.   Neighborhoods have character.

B.   People choose to live in neighborhoods based on their personal values, on being near people like them, on economic factors, and on other similar selection processes.

C.   People express themselves -- their values, economic status, and social status -- through their homes.

D.   People can 'read' home characteristics to determine neighborhood character.

When combined, these first three factors combined create an environment in which people read character in a neighborhood based on home characteristics and express character in their own homes, thus leading to the fourth assumption, that neighborhood character is reflected in visible characteristics. Each of the four points is explicated in more detail below, followed by a review of selected relevant literature.

The following are definitions of terms frequently used in this paper:

home: used in the broader sense, covering not only the house but also those publicly visible elements associated with one's home including the yard, sidewalk, and other elements which may be found on a housing lot.

character: an elusive term. Perhaps the most practical if not the most poetic definition is to consider character as based on those qualities which distinguish neighborhoods from one another. Examples of such qualities include socio-economic status of residents, unique features (including shopping areas, parks, etc), physical characteristics and neighborhood layout.

neighborhood: Portland, OR has a strong system of neighborhood associations. When the specific neighborhood name is used the boundaries followed by the neighborhood association will be followed. Neighborhood maps are included as Figures I, II, and III.

Another important point is that information presented is time and place specific: all assertions, assumptions, and conclusions are assumed to be specific to present day Portland, Oregon and perhaps generalizable to other North American cities in recent history. While some elements may hold true across time and space (e.g. people can read the built environment of their own culture), others clearly do not, especially when discussing which specific elements relate to a specific character. For example, James Duncan notes that where individualism is dominant the house is related to self concept, reflecting personality and social status; in more collectivist cultures "the house is seen as

symbolizing group values, as simply a shelter which has little to do with one's self-concept" (1982, p. 2). As such the meanings or understandings derived here do not necessarily apply to other areas of the world, or even other cultural groups within the United States.

A.   Neighborhoods Have Character

This point is based more on common cultural knowledge than on academic research. In some ways, neighborhood character is almost too common to talk about - it's an assumed part of our everyday lives rather than some mysterious or new concept which shouts for exploration. In Portland, an Informal History and Guide, published by the Oregon Historical Society, past neighborhoods are described as industrial, gracious, bohemian -- "liberated ladies played ukuleles for gentlemen friends who recited poetry" -- or as having "ardent spirit" (O'Donnell & Vaughan, 1984, p. 171). Several characteristics of residents or buildings are given as examples of that character (e.g. wealthy for a gracious neighborhood) but no question is raised about whether or not neighborhoods have discernable character. Discernable neighborhood character is a given, and arises from the types of people in residence.

Certainly there is academically accepted data to support the differences among neighborhoods. The U.S. Department of Census data provides a ready source of information regarding differences in economic status, education level, mobility levels, and other factors. This is one form of character: we might say a neighborhood is rich or poor, stable or experiencing high turnover. These forms of character are based on socio-economic and demographic factors.

Marketing systems can be developed based on the distinct character of different neighborhoods. One system in particular is based on "forty neighborhood types

[repeating across the U.S.], each with distinct boundaries, values, consuming habits and political beliefs" (Weiss, 1988, p. xii). This is also a form of character: neighborhoods might be gentrified (consuming habits), conservative, liberal or alternative, or otherwise characterized by people's values and beliefs.

At first glance, it may seem too simple to base neighborhood character on residential characteristics, however, I believe this move is valid. Neighborhood character could be seen to arise in part from historical factors, such as housing stock, topography (lots with a view tend to be worth more money), and location relative to downtown and transportation networks. However, I would argue that these factors attract certain types of people, based on their values. A potential home buyer who wants a home with a yard that can function as a refuge into nature is unlikely to purchase a downtown loft apartment whereas those who want to live close to downtown and the center of the action may find such a space appealing. One's personal character and values influence whether one wants a refuge, a center of action, or numerous other housing choices. In addition, other factors which reflect the neighborhood character, such as type of shopping available, arise from and change with the social and demographic characteristics of residents (for example, one is not as likely to find a children's clothing store in a retirement community). As such, neighborhood character evolves over time with a gathering of similar residents (see point B, below) and attracting the commercial enterprises and public facilities which serve those residents. Individual changes and differences between homes seem to be essential not just for establishing neighborhood character, but for our accepting that character.

In summary, neighborhood character exists and is related to the characters of the buildings as individually modified. Character is also related to the people who live in a neighborhood, their socioeconomic status, demographic characteristics, values and

beliefs. But this is not enough. If people were spread over the urban fabric regardless of individual characteristics and if these characteristics were not expressed visually for others, neighborhood character would be less likely to form because there would be little to distinguish among neighborhoods beyond geographic topographical factors. Hence, points B and C below are also necessary.

B. People Want to Live Near People Like Themselves

That people want to live near people like themselves is the central argument in The Clustering of America by Michael Weiss. This book notes that types of people live in clusters, identifiable by zip code, and differentiated by income, political beliefs, values, and consumption patterns. As Weiss states, "your zip code -- actually the community it represents . . . can indicate the kinds of magazines you read, the meals you serve at dinner, whether you're a liberal Republican or an apathetic Democrat" (1989, p. xi). In short, while not comprised of exact clones, neighborhoods do tend to represent people living near people like themselves.

Another example of clustering involves racial mixing, or lack thereof, in neighborhoods. Practices of segregation, beginning with city laws and real estate redlining prior to the 1960s and moving to "white flight" where white residents moved from city neighborhoods when African American began to move in, demonstrate this propensity. In addition, homeowners associations and neighborhood covenants may be created in an attempt to keep a neighborhood homogenized. The 1980s saw a wave of urban neighborhood movements which at best led to empowerment for minorities concentrated in a neighborhood, but "at their worst extreme of defensive oppositionism, urban movements can be dominated by property owners who exclude low income people and socially desirable land uses from their community" (Fainstein and Hirst,

1995, p. 183). Such movements are reminiscent of the restrictive covenants found in neighborhoods around the turn of the century.

I would like to point out that although people tend to live near people like themselves, this does not necessarily mean that neighbors know each other or that a resident's sense of community is geographically based in his or her neighborhood. In addition, the salient characteristics for "like myself" can vary by culture. In Portland, it seems these characteristics include race, income, education and employment status, age, and probably political or lifestyle values, but not so much religion or ancestors' social status (caste).

This clustering of people by similar characteristics encourages neighborhood character as many residents may be sending similar messages through the physical features of their homes.

C. People Express Themselves Through Their Homes

By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics (Haraway, 1991, p. 150).

I start this section with an idea borrowed from Donna Haraway: with the advent of mass technology and communication, with bio-engineering and cultural inscription, we do not end, as individuals, where our skin ends. Haraway defines cyborgs as "cybernetic organisms - compounds of hybrid techno-organic embodiment and textuality" (1991, p. 212). Our cultural constructions influence our understandings of the world to such an extent that we are not able to separate ourselves from them and

from the machines that make our lives possible in this time. If one's home is considered as a machine (functionally, to keep us warm, dry, and warehouse the products of our consumption) then it too becomes part of our cybernetic being. Not only do people express themselves through their homes, their homes are part of themselves.

It is clear that homes are used by their owners to express some aspects of the owner's identity. An example of this expression is found in house size. In our consuming culture, one mark of status is the size and grandeur of house that one can possess - so at least for some subcultures in our society, size marks status. In addition, it may be considered a status symbol either to have a new home or an old stately home or an architect designed home. If one begins with the assumption that we live in a capitalistic, consumption oriented society, then any home with a high purchase price connotes wealth and success. So one way of communicating through one's home is simply through the physical structure.

In addition to the relatively stable characteristics of homes (size, location, price), there are more easily changed aspects by which people personalize their homes. This ability to personalize homes has been linked to residential satisfaction with publicly subsidized housing (Becker, 1977; Cooper-Marcus & Sarkissian, 1986). Cooper-Marcus and Sarkissian also find that personalization allows people to give their homes meaning, to adapt their homes to changing circumstances, and increases overall aesthetic attractiveness through "naturally occurring complexity and variety in the exterior visual environment" (1986, p. 65). Amos Rapoport has noted that people use personalization of housing both to assert one's identity to one's self and group and to communicate identity to others (1982a, p. 15). Franklin Becker, in Housing Messages, notes that personalization occurs not just through what we build but also through how we build:

we often do not build just any fence; we build one we like, which in some way reflects our own values, notions of beauty, status, creativity, or skill. Personalization reinforces the occupant's own sense of identity, as well as expresses it to others (1977, p. 51).

Thus, in determining neighborhood character as related to characters of homes, it will be important to examine not just the presence of items, but also the type of item. For example, landscaping may consist of a single bush haphazardly placed, bushes planted in orderly rows and of even heights, or of a tangle of overgrown bushes.

D. People Can Read Character in the Built Environment

This point follows from the previous three and is what gives them significance. The ability to understand the messages to be read in the built environment allows us to navigate the city. Through environmental assessment, urbanites gather clues about appropriate behavior in particular settings. One way of understanding how the built environment is "read" is to use a semiotic approach. Semiotics, the 'science of signs,' is an approach originally based in linguistics which studies how meaning is structured through signification practices.

The analysis of data in this study follows a semiotic approach as outlined by Malcolm Sillars in <u>Messages, Meanings, and Culture</u> (1991). A semiotic approach includes 1) what the message -- in this case house and landscape features -- reveals about the nature of society in terms of elements of house and neighborhood form; and 2) how class and social differences are revealed -- in this case these differences are revealed by choices made by neighborhood residents which differ between neighborhoods. These messages, found in the semi-fixed features of house and landscape, both reflect and reproduce social norms.

Taking a semiotic approach, the study considers the semi-fixed features of the house and landscape as a text. This text is considered a construct of social norms. The study examines "the social meaning the text has for those who use it to make sense of their world" (Sillars, 1991, p. 110). For example, within each neighborhood there are differing means for demonstrating values including privacy and neighboring and for demonstrating wealth. In semiotics, meaning is conveyed through signs. Signs are composed of signifiers and signifieds. Linguistics provides an example: signifiers are words whereas signifieds are the concepts referred to by the words. In this study, a signifier could be a row of large trees fronting the street and the signified could be 'neighborhood stability'. Semioticians then study "how different individuals and social groups construct different meanings from the same signs" (Sillars, 1991, p. 111). Although the relationship between signified and signifier is arbitrary (note the use of different words for the same thing in different languages), the relationship is not open to any interpretation. Neither is the interpretation static. Interpretation is always open-ended and ongoing. What a signifier signifies is formed through social convention; people together create, generate, or negotiate the meaning of signifiers.

There are four primary assumptions in semiotic criticism noted by Sillars (1991). The first is that humans are sign users who communicate using signs. This assumption supports the idea that people can communicate through and read the built environment. The second assumption is that signs are arbitrary. James Duncan (1990) summarizes the arbitrary relationship of symbols in his study of the semiotics of landscape:

> landscapes do not simply fulfill obvious, mundane functional requirements (suburban housing developments provide an environment in which labor can reproduce itself), nor do they simply represent localized cultural creations (house

styles or barn types that arose in New England and diffused to New York). Rather, through the vocabulary of various conventional forms -- signs, symbols, icons, and specialized tropes in the landscape -- people, particularly powerful people, tell morally charged stories about themselves, the social relations within their community (Duncan, 1990, p. 20).

In short, there is "no necessary relationship between the physicality of the sign and the concept it signifies" (Sillars, 1991, p. 112). The third assumption is that no distinctions exist in nature until humans make them. Our understanding of the differences between objects "exists only because language that embodies a difference is accepted as a convention" (Sillars, 1991, p. 112). A common example of this point is that Native Alaskan languages have far more words for snow than does English. Because differences between types of snow were salient in that culture, words were developed to describe those types. Even in current U.S. culture, downhill skiers are more likely to differentiate between types of snow than non-skiers. An example closer to this study is that of cars. One need not necessarily differentiate between types of cars: a Toyota and a Mercedes are the same in terms of number of doors, presence of a trunk, internal combustion engine, and general appropriateness of sizing for U.S. roads. However the two are differentiated and these differences are used for status marking. The fourth point is that meaning is socially constructed. Those who use signs negotiate the meaning of those signs among themselves. This negotiation is not generally a conscious process.

Because the meanings of signs is socially constructed, plurality of meaning for those signs can arise. In other words, a sign can mean different things for different groups and for different individuals within the same groups:

semiotics is involved significantly in the way in which social conventions of values, myths, and ideologies control the user's understanding of a particular text. But the potential is always there for alternate values, myths, and ideologies. Meaning is always potentially plural because of changes in the source or the audience of the message, or the context in which it is viewed (Sillars, 1991, pl. 114).

This point is important in later analysis of the data from this study. Because one subculture in one neighborhood chooses to use an item as a status marker or as a means of conveying messages about neighboring or privacy does not necessitate that the same item will hold the same meaning in other neighborhoods or for other subcultures.

Signs can be divided into three types: icons, indexes, and symbols. Icons have meaning by virtue of a resemblance to the actual object. Examples of icons include photographs, representative paintings and maps. Indexical signs imply meaning; one can figure out the meaning of the sign. For example smoke is an indexical sign for fire, and a house-for-sale sign is an indexical sign. Other examples relevant to this study include large vegetation signifying neighborhood stability, because that vegetation takes time to grow; a fence implying privacy or ownership when used to mark territorial boundaries; and high cost items indicating wealth. Both icons and indexes can be referred to as motivated: the relationship between signifier and signified arises out of some similarity between the two. Iconic and indexical meanings vary in how widely shared they may be (Brummett, 1994).

The third type of sign, symbols, demonstrates an arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified. One must learn the meaning because there is no relationship of the object to the concept represented. Symbols are considered the "most important kinds of signs. Because they are arbitrary, they are considered the most highly

developed and less constrained by outside factors as icons and indexes are" (Sillars, 1991, p. 115). Some signs are more constrained that others. For example, a car which must be purchased for a price far above average car prices cannot be used to indicate poverty in our society, and a dying lawn can't indicate care and upkeep (a non-live lawn might, such as a Japanese rock garden, but one where grass perishes through lack of care can't also indicate high care).

In this study, three main indexical types of signs were found in neighborhoods: high cost house size and vehicle signifying wealth; landscaping signifying values regarding neighboring (see discussion of gift community, Chapter VI); and presence of a physical barrier around the property line signifying privacy and independence. However, even within these indexical signs, there are variations by neighborhood. The variations by neighborhood in type of vehicle, type of landscaping, and type of barrier can be considered to be related to symbolic signs. If there was no difference between a hedge, a wood fence, or a chain link fence used as barriers (e.g. the distinction does not exist in "nature", see the third semiotic assumption), then we might expect these types to be distributed equally by neighborhood. However, that was not the case, suggesting symbolic differences in meaning for hedges, wood fences, and chain link fences.

Signs are organized into codes, and these codes form a system reflecting a larger culture or community. Codes "perform a dual interactive function. They reveal the view of society a person has, and simultaneously help determine what that view will be" (Sillars, 1991, p. 118). Thus, one can define the subcultures in each of the neighborhoods as different, based on the differences in signs used. In the conclusion section, preliminary thoughts on the meaning of those differences in signs is presented.

An additional point is that meanings of signs vary in how widely shared they are. Meanings conveyed by a sign can range from those read by an individual to those

read by society as a whole. Because meaning is complex, with signs capable of having a number of different meanings, "it is a mistake to ask what one thing a sign means" (Brummett, 1994, p. 10). Therefore the interpretations provided in this thesis are not representative of one true meaning, because many meanings are possible. Instead the interpretations ideally represent a widely shared meaning of the signs rather than a reading based on my individual interpretation. To assist in assuring that the meanings are widely shared, comparison is done between the overall reputation of a neighborhood and the meanings found in individual signs. For example, the Cathedral Park neighborhood's reputation as a working class, blue collar community as described in newspaper reports over the past thirty years forms a particular and relatively stable meaning. The reputation as working class helps us interpret the meanings of physical signs found in the neighborhood, such as chain link fences which may be part of the larger code signifying working class.

Semiotics then can be "a complement to the descriptive and case-based orientation of most fieldwork" (Manning, 1987, 43) as an analytic tool, supporting formalizing analysis and making comparisons among sites. By looking for underlying common structures of conveying meaning, a system for understanding the ways in which meaning is conveyed can be developed and used to analyze underlying patterns of communication in context. Through using semiotics, we can identify some of the cues (or signs) by which people read the built environment. It is important to note that when using the term messages in this thesis I am referring to ways in which the environment can be read rather than implying intent on the part of a "message sender".

E. Literature Review

In this section I provide a brief review of studies using similar methods and of studies focused on the vernacular landscape with results relating to the results of this study.

Studies Using Similar Methods

About the House: Levi-Strauss and Beyond examines how house structures communicate messages about identity and culture in non-U.S. or European cultures. In this collection of essays edited by Carsten and Hugh-Jones are cited examples of the house as a political, domestic and physical unit, houses with ritual significance, links between domestic architecture and the wider polity, and the relationship between house space and encoding of rank and gender hierarchies (1995, p. 24).

James Duncan (1990) has perhaps performed the study with the most similar methodology in his work of the politics of landscape in Sri Lanka. Duncan looks at the landscape from a forthrightly semiotic perspective, finding landscape to be a signifying system:

> The landscape, I would argue is one of the central elements in a cultural system, for as an ordered assemblage of objects, a text, it acts as a signifying system through which a social system is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored. In order to understand this structured and structuring quality of landscape we must first inquire into what is signified by the landscape. . . . Second, we must examine the manner in which this signification takes place" (Duncan, 1990, p. 17).

To do so, he examines the royal capital of Kandy in Sri Lanka during the early nineteenth century. At that time two discourses on kingship existed, each of which had written texts associated with it. Each discourse also "has an attendant landscape model"

one of which supports religious structures and public works, the other of which supports palaces. The city thus manifested the power and struggles between these two discourses or sets of cultural beliefs. A comparison between texts and landscape features is provided, similar to what this study undertakes with newspaper and other archival documents and neighborhood field observation. His interpretation and analysis methods include simple frequency tables, and description of landscape and its concurrent textual interpretation.

Several studies similar to the present study are undertaken by Wilbur Zelinsky. In Exploring the Beloved Country: Geographic forays into American Society and Culture (1994) Zelinsky uses different types of unobtrusive measures to explore the differences between towns and between regions of the country. The most relevant study Zelinsky undertakes, for the purposes of the current work, is that of the Pennsylvania town. His exploration is based

> on the twin premises that, of all the works of man, the dense, complex, totally
>
> artificial creation we call the town or city is probably the most profusely charged
>
> with cultural signals and that major clues to regional or national cultural identity
>
> can be extracted from groups of agglomerated settlements (1994, p. 159).

This mirrors my premises with the exception that I am exploring neighborhood rather than regional or national cultural identity.

In order to capture the regional culture or character, Zelinsky identified several traits and used a checklist of those traits for each area. He looked at the following features: house types, types of building materials, percentage of buildings set back from the street or sidewalk, degree that residential and other functions are areally intermingled, shade trees, brick sidewalks, alleys, and a subjective impression of the degree of "Pennsylvanianness" of the place" (1994, p. 160). This data was gathered

through field observation, driving the study area using a 'nonrigorous' representative sample. Zelinsky notes that this method of data collection is imperfect, subject to researcher subjectivity, difficult to replicate, and non-exhaustive. However he finds it the best method in order to probe "complex bundles of phenomena that extend over large tracts and periods" without confining "ourselves to analyzing single traits or narrowly circumscribed questions or to exhaustive inventorying of a quite restricted territory" (1994, p. 162). He provides results of the study as summary tables of the data combined with narrative interpretation.

Jack Solomon (1988) examines the semiotics of the front yard. He finds this analysis important for humans as territorial creatures, with a need for both private and shared space. He states that neighborhoods have a semiotic code by which neighbors signal a sense of community. Solomon is providing more of a tantalizing overview rather than a scientific study, but he does make one statement related to this paper regarding the front lawn

> as a signaling system by which we communicate to our neighbors . . . our willingness to maintain the physical integrity of the neighborhood. Lawns and gardens are . . . signs with which private-home owners communicate their sense of neighborhood cooperation. . . . [W]eeds do not simply run down property values; they also signify a neighborhood at odds with itself, a community of strangers withdrawn into their own private shells (Solomon, 1988, p. 107).

Unfortunately, Solomon's work does not provide greater depth of analysis or examples. The work is included here because his suggestion of low maintenance yards signaling urban anomie and dissociation is one which will be returned to in the results and interpretation sections of this paper.

Studies Focused on the Vernacular Environment

Rapoport (1969) suggests that a traditional, stable working class neighborhood might show more traditional forms than the other two neighborhoods. As a neighborhood with third and fourth generation residents maintaining similar education and employment patterns, change seems less likely to occur than in the other neighborhoods. Rapoport considers

> the fact that our culture puts a premium on originality, often striving for it for its own sake. . . . This dissatisfaction is often based on nonfunctional considerations and is linked to socio-cultural factors. In most traditional cultures, novelty is not only not sought after, but is regarded as undesirable (Rapoport, 1969, p. 7).

On the other hand, neighborhoods of the successful, who have a stake in maintaining the traditional status quo may also be interested in maintaining traditional forms, as might those who are attempting to gain higher status and recognize that status through the traditional forms.

Jacobs (1985) performed a walk-through of a neighborhood, attempting to put together a history and character of the neighborhood based on environmental cues. Some elements which Jacobs noted as relevant include the possibility that "security stickers on doors and windows and the lace curtains indicate elderly residents" (1985, p. 18). He found that the most telling indicators were buildings with "age, size, quality of materials, nature of design, and quality of maintenance . . . along with yard maintenance and landscaping" (p. 27). However, at least one area was becoming gentrified, with higher income people moving in, but the physical environment had not yet changed to reflect the changing demographics; people had not yet modified their house fronts and landscaping.

James Duncan (1973) has performed the study which most closely relates to the present study. He examines two upper-income neighborhoods and finds differences in the landscape corresponding to the ways in which the two groups differentiate themselves. Residents can be divided into alpha and beta groups, as can the landscape. The alpha residents "appear to value the English upper-class style of studied seediness . . . . [and in landscaping] reflect that preference in their 'natural' aura and their appearance of considerable age" (1973, p. 343). The alpha area is the oldest, with narrow unpaved road and including a wide variety of housing styles, well set back from the road and from other houses. The beta landscape, in contrast, is much more recent, with open expanses of lawns and "shrubs and trees arranged symmetrically" (1973, p. 344). Beta residents are also more likely to use particular ornamentation: eagle ornaments, colonial-style lampposts and ornate mailboxes, which alpha residents find questionable. The exclusive golf club and garden club are more easily accessible to alpha residents: "one's landscape tastes might well be an unstated criterion for membership in the club" (1973, p. 344). Residents of the area as a whole who belong to the New York Social Register predominantly live in the alpha area (94.2%). Thus, even within a group with similar socioeconomic status, there are ways to code the landscape to differentiate between members.

Amos Rapoport, in his 1982 book The Meaning of the Built Environment notes several ways in which the physical elements of houses and yards create meaning which is read by the residents and others. One example includes elements which make public housing seem less like public housing: small-paned windows, classical doorways, and small front yards with low fences (1982b, p. 16). Rapoport cites a paper by a student which compared semifixed elements in a white ethnic, blue collar neighborhood with those in a professional-academic, fairly high-status area. The student found that

personalization was higher in the blue collar area (1982b, p. 126). Rapoport suggests that perhaps in the higher status area, the reputation of the area alone was enough to convey identity whereas the other neighborhood needed elements of personalization to convey a particular social identity. Rapoport notes that middle income groups tend to evaluate "highly manicured planting positively and wild, natural landscape negatively" and that high income groups show the reverse valuation (1982b, p. 157).

Craik and Appleyard in their 1980 study found the following cues for residential "well-to-do" status: "evidence of attractive exterior decoration; ample vegetation and landscaping; careful maintenance; and spatial separation of units" (1980, p. 80). Similar work has identified specific features as reducing the perceived likelihood of crime (Brower, Dockett and Taylor, 1983; Cooper Marcus and Sarkissian, 1986).

CHAPTER III

NEIGHBORHOOD SELECTION AND PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

This brief chapter provides background on the process used for neighborhood selection and the methods used for establishing neighborhood character: outside sources and activities present within each neighborhood. It is important to note that the City of Portland is divided into over 90 politically defined neighborhoods, with official boundaries and representation to the City. Each neighborhood has a neighborhood association which meets regularly and receives support from the City. The neighborhood selection and data gathering process used the neighborhood association definitions for neighborhood boundaries.

Neighborhood Selection

Contrast was the defining feature used in selecting neighborhoods. Three neighborhoods were selected which contrasted on the basis of residential economic status, education levels, and pre-study impression of neighborhood character. Prior to selecting contrasting neighborhoods, several features were used as criteria to create a pool of eligible neighborhoods. These selection criteria assured that the neighborhoods studied would provide both comparable data and a rich amount of data. The selection criteria are listed below:

• within Portland city limits;

• comprised of predominantly white residents (for two reasons: different racial or ethnic groups may find very different meaning in similar acts thus a cross-cultural comparison may not be possible using only observation, and a relatively large minority population may change the reputation of the neighborhood such

that its character is seen as a stereotyped characteristic of that minority regardless of physical characteristics); and

- predominantly single family homes (although one can personalize an apartment window, it is much less 'telling' than an entire house facade and yard).

Based on the above criteria and an attempt to maximize contrast while holding some characteristics comparable, three City of Portland neighborhoods were selected: Hosford-Abernathy (focusing on the Clinton Street area), Cathedral Park and Laurelhurst.

Hosford-Abernathy was the first neighborhood selected because it represents an alternative neighborhood. This neighborhood may be in the early stages of becoming gentrified and has a broad reputation as a "hip" neighborhood. The neighborhood centers around the corner of Clinton and 26th Streets. The official neighborhood definition includes five sub-parts. I have excluded two sub-parts of the neighborhood which are more well-off and one sub-part which is primarily industrial, and have chosen to focus on the two sub-parts surrounding Clinton Street: the Hosford-Clinton Area and West Clinton Area. Please see Figure 1: Map of Hosford-Abernethy/Clinton Street Area for a map of the neighborhood, with the two studied sub-parts marked, following this section. References to Hosford-Abernethy refer to the entire neighborhood and references to Clinton Street area refer to the two subparts within the neighborhood.

Cathedral Park provides a counterpoint to the Clinton Street area, with a similar economic status but very different feel - this time stable, working class. While Cathedral Park is an officially designated neighborhood, in popular reports it is most often grouped with the St. Johns neighborhood in an area called St. Johns. Originally this was one neighborhood called St. Johns, however it was split into two official neighborhoods (Cathedral Park and St Johns) due to administrative tiffs rather than any

real difference between the neighborhoods (Carl Abbott, personal communication, January 1997). A map of the Cathedral Park neighborhood is included as Figure 2: Map of Cathedral Park. All references to Cathedral Park follow the specific neighborhood boundaries; references to St. Johns include the larger area encompassing both the Cathedral Park and St. Johns neighborhoods.

Laurelhurst was the third and final neighborhood selected. This was a more difficult choice. Ideally I wanted to find a neighborhood with similar "hip" or alternative character to Clinton Street but that was more wealthy. The neighborhoods which leaped to mind for great contrast potential were much more conservative. One neighborhood well known for liberal beliefs and expensive homes was strongly considered but then rejected because the percentage of residents living in poverty was higher than expected and somewhat comparable to that in the Clinton Street area. The Laurelhurst neighborhood was selected as a neighborhood both wealthy and with a reputation as relatively liberal as compared to other upper-income neighborhoods in Portland. A map of the Laurelhurst neighborhood is included as Figure 3: Map of Laurelhurst. Unlike the other two neighborhoods, all references to Laurelhurst refer to Laurelhurst. The original Laurelhurst boundaries were expanded to include two blocks of a commercial street and the homes on the backside of those blocks, but other than that the boundaries remain the same as those defined at the turn of the century.

In summary, the Clinton Street area is the 'base' neighborhood, with a low-moderate income and liberal/alternative character. Cathedral Park is a comparison neighborhood in terms of economic character, with a more conservative, working class bent. Laurelhurst contrasts with the Clinton Street area in terms of economic status, representing a more wealthy segment of Portland's population. These distinctions were made prior to starting the study, in order to determine which neighborhoods to study,

and based on my general understanding of each neighborhood's character and conversations with other Portland natives.
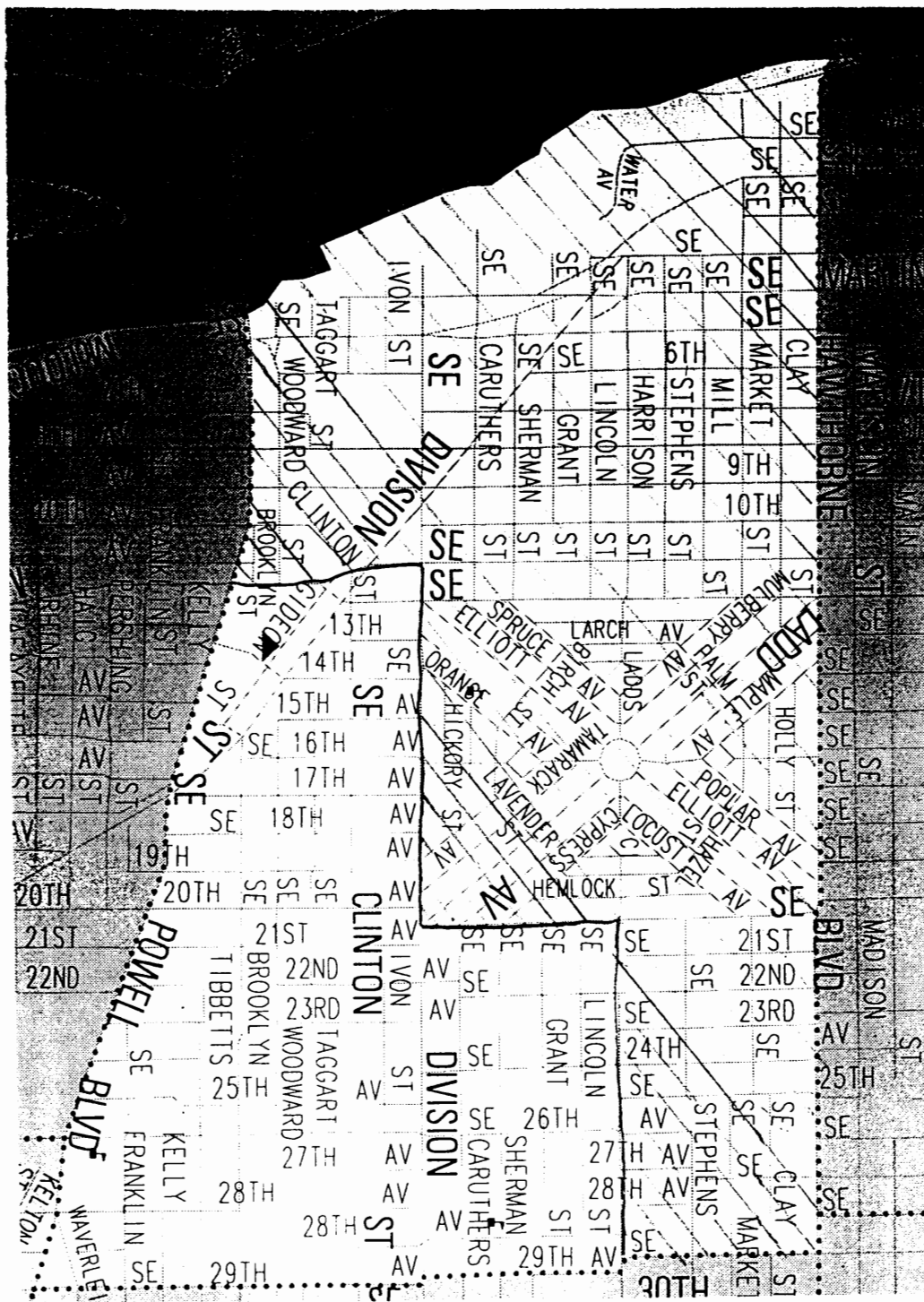
Figure 1: Map of Clinton Street area N →
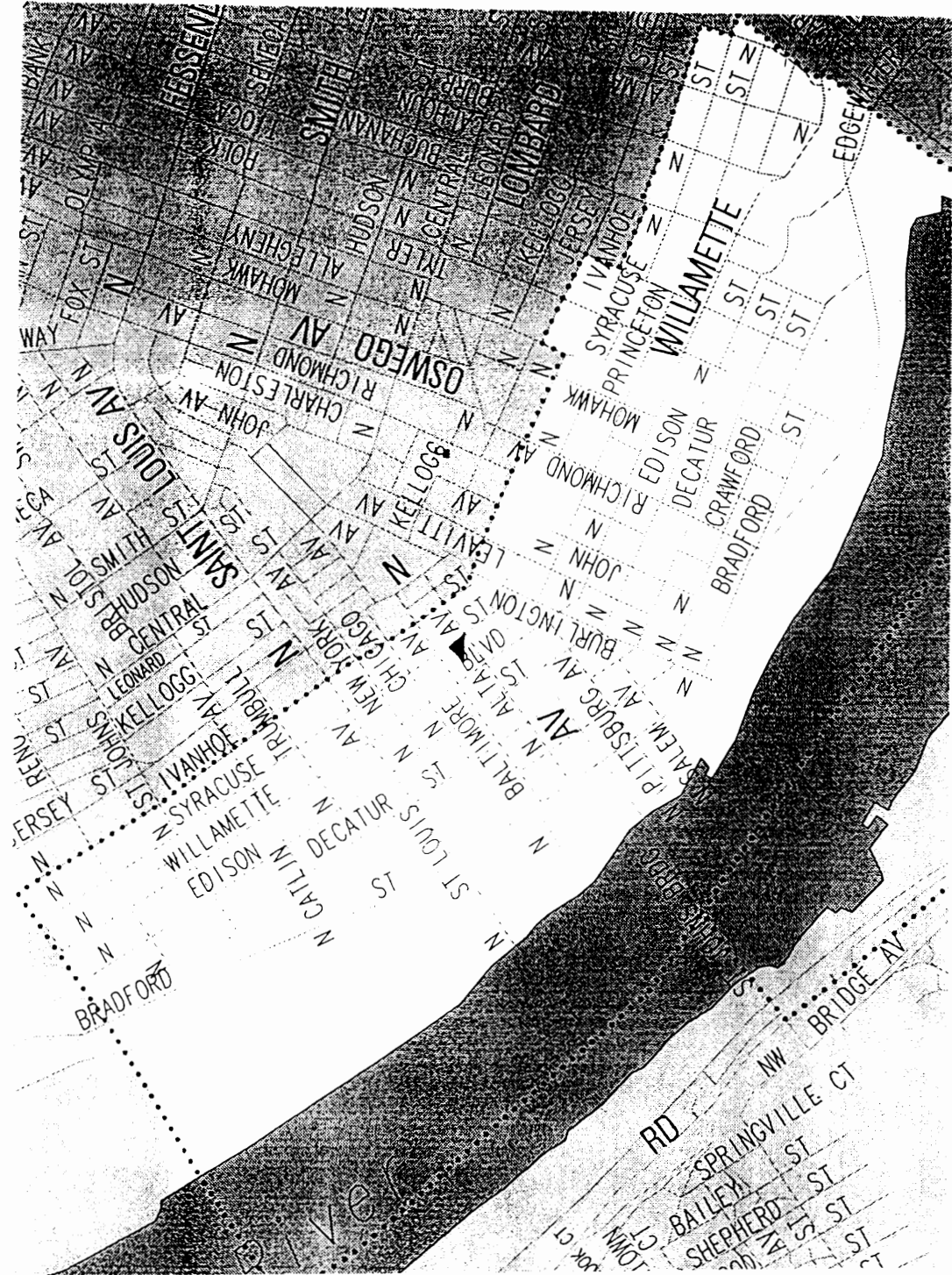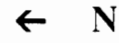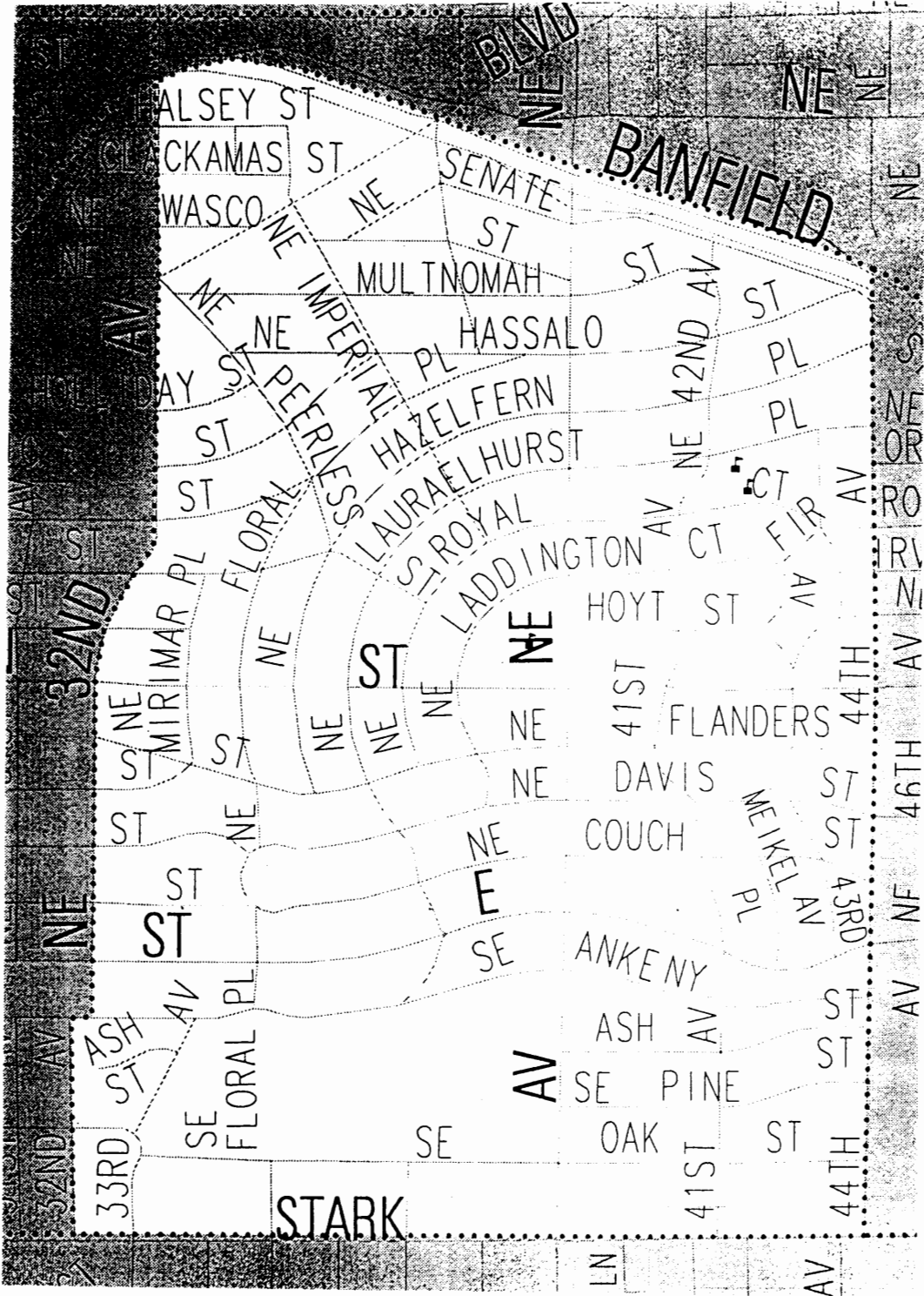
Figure 2: Map of Cathedral Park

Figure 3: Map of Laurelhurst

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Methods for Establishing Neighborhood Character

After selection of the neighborhoods, the next step was to establish the character of each neighborhood. Establishing character was essential to provide a base for use when comparing differences in observed physical characteristics with differences in character. The methods used included looking at written documentation regarding the neighborhoods and driving through each neighborhood to document the mix and type of non-residential uses and traffic patterns. These data were used as an "objective" version of the character of the neighborhood. Not to suggest that the written materials were truly objective and unbiased, but that it is these biases which lead to or reflect neighborhood character. A wealthy neighborhood is "wealthy" not just because the residents have a lot of money, but also because the general public "knows" that residents are wealthy. Newspaper reports especially were valuable in providing these sorts of generalizations about the reputation of a neighborhood. Each of the methods and selected data provided by that method are summarized below. These data were then combined to form an overall impression of neighborhood character which is given as the sub-section "Neighborhood Character" following this section.

Archival methods used to establish the reputed character of a neighborhood include examining newspaper and other articles, neighborhood association information, community development corporation information, 1990 Census data and other documents. Specific examples of archival research performed include the following:

Copies of neighborhood maps were obtained from the Office of Neighborhood Associations, the Hosford-Abernathy Neighborhood Plan from the Planning Bureau (the other two neighborhoods do not have plans, although one is being prepared for Cathedral Park), and West Clinton Plan from REACH Community Development Corporation. The neighborhood maps are those shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3 above.

Review of the Oregon Historical Society Museum neighborhood files on both the St. Johns (including Cathedral Park) and Laurelhurst neighborhoods provided valuable background data. By far the most information was available on St. Johns. No file existed for Hosford-Abernathy or for the larger surrounding Southeast Portland area. Information on Laurelhurst primarily stressed the pleasant residential feel. Information on St Johns primarily stressed industry or commercial over residential; even when describing residents, articles often used terms such as 'working man' or others related to work, whereas the Laurelhurst residents were simply residents (excluding one newspaper article which used the term "white collar"). The process used was to scan articles and copy down that information which seemed to provide hints at character. In other words I did not concentrate so much on historical fact (dates, events, etc) as on descriptions of the neighborhood.

A CD-ROM search was performed on newspaper articles from the major local newspaper (The Oregonian) from 1991 through 1996. The following terms were used for the search: Hosford-Abernethy, Clinton Street, Laurelhurst neighborhood, St. Johns neighborhood, and Cathedral Park. Both Laurelhurst and St. Johns required the additional "neighborhood" search term in order to bring down the number of articles to a manageable level, suggesting that these two are more frequently mentioned in the paper. Perhaps this variation is because neighborhood establishments with the same name including Laurelhurst Park and the St. Johns police station which create a sort of "noise" in the data not strictly related to the neighborhood character, whereas Hosford-Abernethy is a name distinct to the neighborhood. No trends stood out in terms of the sorts of articles written about each neighborhood. Some years a neighborhood would be mentioned often if a particular newsworthy or controversial activity were occurring such as the nighttime 'raids' of Laurelhurst Park or the proposed replacement of a park

with high density housing in St. Johns. Many of the Clinton Street citations actually referred to the Clinton Street Theater rather than to the area itself.

Perusal of Portland history books provided a sense of the historical basis of the neighborhoods, such as when the neighborhoods were first platted. This data was used to assure that all three neighborhoods were of a similar age.

In addition to archival data, a street by street census of each neighborhood was taken to develop a list of the non-residential uses, including industrial, commercial, and public uses such as schools, parks and community gardens. These activities did in fact vary by neighborhood. Laurelhurst, with the exception of the extension to include two blocks of the commercial strip, contains no commercial or industrial uses. The Clinton Street area contained a mix of the commercial and industrial, somewhat scattered throughout the overall area. Cathedral Park also contained industrial and commercial uses, but with the exception of a few taverns and neighborhood groceries, these tended to be relegated to the edges of the neighborhood. A listing of non-residential uses found in each neighborhood is included as Appendix I.

Each of the neighborhoods is described, along with a general description of the City of Portland in the following chapter. These descriptions are based on the above described research and are intended to form the basis of neighborhood character assumptions. The neighborhood character as developed in the next chapter is then used to assist in interpretation of the messages signified by differences in the semi-fixed features of the residential environments.

CHAPTER IV

CHARACTER OF THREE PORTLAND NEIGHBORHOODS

This study focuses on three neighborhoods located within the City of Portland, Oregon: the Clinton Street area as a sub-neighborhood within Hosford-Abernethy, Laurelhurst, and Cathedral Park. The character of each neighborhood was determined using archival data and cataloguing of non-residential neighborhood uses as described in the previous chapter. Each neighborhood is described in more detail below. These descriptions of neighborhood character are used in the following chapters in interpretation of the meanings of differences in neighborhood residential environment. Prior to the neighborhood descriptions is a description of Portland, Oregon provided as the context within which these neighborhoods are located.

Portland, Oregon is a relatively homogeneous West Coast city. According to the 1990 U.S. Decennial Census, the population is 467,401 persons. Of these residents, most are Caucasian (85.4%), have at least a High School diploma or equivalent (82.6%), and income above the poverty level (85.6%). In addition, 6.3% of households have an income of $75,000 per year or greater (1990 Census). Where Portland stands out is in its continuing strong central business district and strong, identifiable neighborhoods. Like the citizenry, Portland's neighborhoods tend to be fairly mixed in terms of housing styles, with a few upper end and lower end neighborhoods. Portland lacks both the slums or blighted areas and the wealthy gated-communities characteristic of many U.S. cities in the 1990s.

Portland's history begins in the 1840s with the greatest population expansions around the turn of the century, which is when all three neighborhoods under consideration first began developing. Portland has a strong network of neighborhood

associations, beginning with the neighborhood movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s and formalized into the Office of Neighborhood Associations which provides "city assistance to independent neighborhood groups" (Abbott, 1993, p. 110). Portland now has more than ninety neighborhood associations brought together through seven district offices and served by the Office of Neighborhood Associations, is a City bureau. Each neighborhood examined in this study was determined initially using the official neighborhood boundaries. As discussed in the neighborhood selection section above, research encompassed broader areas than those observed during the field research portion of this study (Chapter V).

The demographic and housing characteristics of the three neighborhoods and the City of Portland are provided in table format on the following pages, for ease of comparison. The official neighborhood boundaries were used for the Cathedral Park and Laurelhurst neighborhoods; the Clinton Street area uses block group level Census data closely according to the two sub-areas studied in that neighborhood. Following the tables are descriptions of each neighborhood. As the demographic data show, the three neighborhoods are roughly comparable in terms of having a predominantly white population, with a similar number of people per household, and percentage of residents born in Oregon. The age breakdown is fairly similar between neighborhoods. Education and income are the areas where the demographic statistics really diverge. Cathedral Park residents are much less likely to have completed high school, or to have gone on to college. Laurelhurst residents are quite a bit more likely to have a college degree. Clinton Street area residents tend to fall somewhere in the middle, both in terms of education and income. Mirroring the education pattern, Cathedral Park residents were more commonly earning less than $15,000 per year in 1989 whereas Laurelhurst residents much more frequently earned at least $50,000.

Demographic characteristics provide information regarding the neighborhood and potential character aspects of that neighborhood. For example, a neighborhood where most make under $15,000 per year is unlikely to be characterized as wealthy or where most respondents have completed college characterized as working class.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Neighborhoods

	Clinton Street Area	Cathedral Park	Laurelhurst	Portland
Population	5,161	2,981	4,786	467,401
% White	83%	88%	94%	85%
Age				
Under 18 yrs	22%	25%	23%	21%
18-34 yrs	ages 18-64: 66%	27%	20%	29%
35-64 yrs		32%	42%	35%
65 and over	12%	14%	13%	14%
People per household	2.31	2.32	2.57	2.35
Born in OR	44%	53%	51%	48%
Education				
Less than High Sch.	20%	28%	6%	17%
High School/GED	21%	35%	17%	25%
Some College	34%	29%	29%	32%
College Degree ·	26%	7%	48%	25%
Household income - 1989				
less than $15,000	31%	42%	13%	28%
$15,000-$24,999	23%	20%	9%	21%
$25,000-$49,999	34%	29%	39%	5%
$50,000-$74,999	11%	7%	24%	11%
$75,000 and above	1%	2%	15%	6%
% below Poverty Level	21%	16%	4%	14%

Note. All data from 1990 U.S. Census.

Table 2

Housing Characteristics of Neighborhoods

		Clinton Street Area	Cathedral Park	Laurelhurst	Portland
Rooms per housing unit		5.19	4.79	7.18	5.18
% Owner occupied		44%	42%	82%	50%
In same house 5 yrs ago		47%	41%	59%	61%
Year structure built					
	prior to 1940	59%	40%	83%	38%
	1940-1959	24%	19%	15%	32%
	1960-1979	16%	31%	2%	24%
	1980-1990	1%	10%	0%	7%

Note. all data from 1990 U.S. Census

The housing characteristics data shows that Laurelhurst homes are likely larger (more rooms) and almost twice as many are owner occupied. Residents of Cathedral Park show less stability than residents of the Clinton Street area or Laurelhurst in terms of remaining in the same house over a 5 year period which may or may not contradict newspaper reports of Cathedral Park as a neighborhood with a stable residential population (depending on whether residents are moving to other homes within the neighborhood). In all three neighborhoods the majority of homes were built prior to

1940; Laurelhurst has many more homes built prior to 1940 than do the other two neighborhoods. Cathedral Park has had the most recent home building, and the greatest number of "snout" houses where the garage is closer to the street than the house: a relatively recent housing style.

The following descriptions of neighborhoods incorporate the above data with information gathered from other archival sources and from observation of the neighborhood in order to provide a thorough background description of each neighborhood and its character by reputation.

Hosford-Abernethy

The Hosford-Abernethy neighborhood is located in inner Southeast Portland, just across the Willamette River from Portland's central business district. As defined by the official boundaries this neighborhood contains a broad mix of uses, from industrial near the river, several commercial streets and some strictly residential areas. For the purposes of this study, I have excluded two sub-parts of the neighborhood which are more financially well-off and others which are primarily industrial or commercial, and have chosen to focus on the two areas surrounding Clinton Street: the Hosford-Clinton Area and the West Clinton Area (henceforth referred to as the Clinton Street area).

The Clinton Street area, centering on SE Clinton and SE 26th Streets, is an area on the verge of renewal, but still includes a fertile mix of affordable, older well-built homes in need of fixing up, starter homes, homes on the rise, and adequate neighborhood services. The corner of Clinton and 26th has long been home to the Clinton Street Theater which hosts a variety of performances from plays and local bands to midnight showings of the Rocky Horror Picture Show. Also at this corner are several restaurants (Mexican, Polynesian, American), a bar, 2 coffee shops, 2 resale

clothing stores, a wellness center, a used album store (primarily records, not tapes or CDs), a lower end antique store, and a house siding shop. Of note, one coffee shop -- The Millennium Cafe -- is home to multiple computers, so patrons can sip and surf. I saw the only marked in-home businesses in this neighborhood: a beauty salon that was located in an area with larger homes and more well manicured lawns; and a reporting agency. This neighborhood has a fair amount of mixed use, but overall it is primarily residential, with a stable, high owner-occupancy rate. There are a few pockets of deteriorated housing and less well-maintained homes. Most of the homes are older. Mixed ages and income groups live here. Commuter and commercial traffic can be a problem in this neighborhood. Both Clinton Street and its neighboring Division Street are pressed into use as funnels to the downtown business district. A bike lane exists. In this area are a high school, middle school, and a school for the deaf.

The Clinton street area has been undergoing changes within the past five years. A February 1991 local newsweekly article describes the West Clinton area as less than desirable, citing the following features: "wedged between railroad tracks, highway embankments, industrial loading docks and busy arterial streets", "full of aging victorians and squatty bungalows in faded pastels", "sporting rusty pickups as common form of transportation" and an overall "weatherworn" feel (Schrag, 1991, p. 1). However by a 1992 survey, residents felt the neighborhood had changed from 1990, based on the following characteristics: houses cleaned up/renovated, increased home ownership, neighbors more involved and proud of neighborhood, trees and rosebushes planted, drug houses closed, good people moving in, improved yard appearance, and increased pride in buildings (West Clinton - Then and Now, 1992). Perhaps more noteworthy, by 1996 the main Portland newspaper described this area as a "hot spot for hipsters", "full of old Portland houses that sit around a thriving business community"

including retro clothing stores where one can find the "ultimate party shoe," and containing a mix of unusual restaurants ranging from "authentic island food with decor that's distinctly Hawaiian" to American with "low light and kitschy art - the perfect atmosphere for whiling away a lazy day" to "Mexican upbeat" serving a breakfast taco (Osterman, 1996b, p. A&E6).

Much of the change cited above may be related to a neighborhood revitalization movement occurring in the early 1990s, sponsored by the REACH Community Development Corporation. It is worth noting that in the revitalization process neighbors specified their desire for a neighborhood that was not overly exclusive or gentrified, and free of both racism and crime. This neighborhood is also the only neighborhood included in this study with a completed City of Portland neighborhood plan. The Clinton Street area neighborhood is a neighborhood in transition. Residential characteristics are changing: the neighborhood is becoming younger and is undergoing revitalization of both homes and commercial areas. Non-residential activities in the neighborhood are listed in Appendix I.

Laurelhurst

The Laurelhurst neighborhood is located between 32nd and 44th Avenues, so beginning 32 blocks from the Willamette river and Portland central business district and continuing east for twelve blocks. One side is bounded by a freeway and the other by a busy commuter street (Stark Street). As defined by official neighborhood boundaries this neighborhood is almost strictly residential, including commercial uses in only one small corner. The entire neighborhood, excluding the commercial area (those blocks N/NE of Sandy Blvd) was included in the study.

The Laurelhurst neighborhood was platted in 1909 and is unique among the three studied in being designed as an upper income, exclusive neighborhood. Laurelhurst was created as an example of the City Beautiful movement with winding streets, a park with creekbed and pond (voted most beautiful on west coast by a 1910s meeting of Pacific Coast Parks Association) (Portland Bureau of Planning, 1985), a roundabout (formerly the location of the sales office, now home to a Joan of Arc statue), subdivision gateways, and lush landscaping (City of Portland Bureau of Planning, 1978). There are no commercial uses included inside the original Laurelhurst boundaries. The commercial area included in official neighborhood boundaries is clearly not designed as part of the neighborhood as indicated by an elevation change and the street layout. Services include a grade school, church school, and several churches. Traffic is more intense than might be expected in an upper-income, exclusively residential neighborhood. Laurelhurst was originally served by four streetcar lines. Throughout Portland, the streetcar lines have evolved into main thoroughfares and this pattern holds true in Laurelhurst. Stark Street and Sandy Boulevard on the edges of the neighborhood are main commuter streets. Both Burnside Street and 39th Street carry a heavy load of traffic and cut through the middle of the neighborhood.

Laurelhurst went through a period of decline. A 1971 study describes this area as of declining value containing still stately homes selling for less than the value of an average house in Portland, a park where visitors feared "perverts" and avoided the dirty lake overtaken by ducks, and suffering from traffic bringing "dirt, noise, confusion, and lack of privacy". In short, it was a "borderline area on brink of destruction" (Kelson, 1971, p. 9). Times have changed. By 1988, the Oregonian was describing this area as stately and well-manicured. Residents may also have changed, demonstrating a more individualistic perspective, than in the days when the

neighborhood was defined by restrictive covenants. In 1994 residents voted against becoming a historic conservation district citing the desire to maintain freedom of control over individual property. A newspaper article at the time described the decisive meeting: "one by one, opponents stood up to say that they should have the right to do whatever they want with their own homes, whether other people thought it was in bad taste or not" or as one resident said, "I may not always like what my neighbor does with their yard, but it's their right to do whatever they want" (Foden-Vencil, 1994, p. D2). In addition, a 1992 Portland police raid on gay men in Laurelhurst Park was met with strong disapproval by residents. Some neighbors complained at a citizens review board. In fact "one resident said she felt safer having gay men in the park, knowing that they would come to her aid if anybody jumped her or tried to break into her house. Loud music, parties and car prowls all decreased when gay men were there" (Danks, 1993, p. A1).

At least partially in response to the raids, a park patrol group has formed. Members of the group patrol the park wearing "orange safety vests and hats and carrying cellular phones and flashlights" (Danks, 1993, p. A1). This information is of interest regarding neighborhood character, not only because it suggests involvement by residents but also because of the economic status displayed by the group -- residents have purchased special gear and cellular phones for the purposes of the patrol group.

Cathedral Park

Cathedral Park is a traditionally working class, democratic, blue collar neighborhood. It is further North and West than the other two neighborhoods and across the river from an industrial area. Within the official neighborhood boundaries are a mix of industries fronting the river, merging into residential as one moves inland.

This study included the whole of the Cathedral Park neighborhood; although any streets that were primarily industrial were not studied there is no clear boundary to separate industrial from residential areas.

The Cathedral Park neighborhood is part of the larger St. Johns neighborhood, and in fact originally was a part of the St. Johns neighborhood until conflicts split the two. Because unofficially this area is referred to as St. Johns, much of the neighborhood information gathered stems from a history of St Johns. St Johns began as its own city, incorporated in 1865, and annexed into the City of Portland in 1915 (O'Donnell & Vaughan, 1984). Since then it has twice seceded from and rejoined the City of Portland. This is a neighborhood with a strong history of independence.

Cathedral Park is bounded on the south by the Willamette River and industries including storage lots for cars being shipped into Portland to sell. On the north side a commercial area arises including restaurants, offices, churches, a Post Office, and a Fraternal Order building. Mixed in the neighborhood are taverns, neighborhood groceries and the Love Temple Club. The residential mix includes primarily one story single family homes, however there are several apartment buildings and a few newer row houses. Traffic within the neighborhood is light although it includes semi-trucks driving through the residential areas to reach the industries fronting the river. The street along the northern edge bears a heavy load of traffic. The St Johns bridge enters the center of the neighborhood. Underneath, and for a block or so to either side of the bridge is Cathedral Park, home to the Jazz Festival in the summer months. In addition, the neighborhood has another park and a community garden. Services include a health clinic and a U.S. Post Office. Across the street and officially in the St. Johns neighborhood are additional city services including a library and police station.

This area of Portland is known both for its industrial focus and its family oriented atmosphere. In 1903 when still a separate city, St Johns was second for number of industries among all cities within the state (City of Portland Bureau of Planning, 1978). In 1977 the neighborhood was described as having more third and fourth generation residents than any other neighborhood in city (Pement, 1977). A 1986 article described St Johns as a viable place to live, raise and educate families, and conduct business with residents described as "anxious, adamant, proud, honest, interested, and very concerned" (Drougas & Sherman, 1986, p. 15). By 1996 a series of newspaper articles described St. Johns as the most heavily industrialized area of the entire state and as exceeding the population density goals of the regional plan. The articles describe a neighborhood that "has been turning itself around in a remarkable way" (O'Sullivan, 1996, p. PZ2) and as

> one of the few charmed places left in Portland yet to be 'discovered.' No pricey boutiques or trendy vegetarian cafes here -- just locally owned shops run by down-to-earth people. Urban living with a small-town flavor means you're more likely to see overalls and big bellies than nose rings and tattoos (Osterman, 1996a, p. A&E7).

At the time of this study the St. Johns area, including the Cathedral Park neighborhood, can be described as an area with affordable small homes, close to employment in industrial areas, with a small town feel, struggling to remain distinct from some of Portland's nearby more troubled neighborhoods, and having the potential for revitalization and gentrification.

CHAPTER V

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology was designed to allow the variations by neighborhood to emerge through observation. A preliminary drive through each neighborhood suggested features which seemed to vary by neighborhood. Several streets in each neighborhood were then randomly selected in order to bring the number of observations to a manageable level and to assure representation throughout the neighborhood. An initial observation was then conducted for the homes on each street. Following completion of the initial observation, additional features were added for observation, and a second round of observations was undertaken. These procedures are described in this chapter.

Selection of Streets for Observation

The units of observation were house and yards. The study began with a focus on the houses and yards within five blocks (e.g. the houses and yards facing each other across the street for the distance of a block, "block faces"), within each of the three neighborhoods. Purposive sampling was used to select the three neighborhoods, and random sampling used to select the five blocks within those neighborhoods. The process for randomly numbering and selecting the streets for observation follows that outlined on pages 208/209 in Babbie (1995) and was as follows:

1) Numbered streets in each neighborhood (streets being the two facing block fronts to be observed).

-exclude boundary streets,

- within the Hosford-Abernethy neighborhood, the Ladds Addition and Colonial Heights areas were excluded as of moderate and upper income, -exclude commercial and industrial streets (as noted on drive through of neighborhoods). For Hosford-Abernethy, this meant excluding the industrial section. For Laurelhurst, this meant excluding the area including Sandy Boulevard and the two blocks to the north.

-the total number of streets in each neighborhood were Laurelhurst: 193 streets; Cathedral Park: 241 streets; the Clinton Street area: 210 streets

2) Determine number of digits needed - three in this case (ranging from 001 to top number for each neighborhood

3) Using random number table (Appendix D: Random Numbers in Babbie, 1995):

a) use first three digits of the number (reading from the left)

b) start with 13th row and second column

c) continue down column and up to top of next row

4) Pick the first 10 numbers within the range of values of neighborhood streets. Continue for each neighborhood.

- 10 numbers were picked - 5 for the observation, 5 as backup in case any of the original 5 were not appropriate (one block front commercial, apartments, or otherwise not suitable) or the street does not exist.

In general, this process worked fairly well. The process did result in a significant amount of driving as streets were eliminated as unsuitable; in retrospect a more efficient process would have been to outline a procedure for use if a block was unsuitable, such as to take the next block face to the North (on East-West running streets) or to the West (on North-South running streets). There were three difficulties which resulted from the

procedure. The first is that within the Clinton Street area sample, the second group of five streets selected was decidedly not representative. Combining the streets observed in the first group of five with those in the second group would have resulted in 4 of the 5 streets being located within one block of one another thus defeating the purpose of proportionate representation of streets throughout the neighborhood. As a result, the numbers for the second group of streets was redrawn.

The second arose because the criterion of using all houses on five blocks yielded a disproportionate number of houses observed across neighborhoods. In Laurelhurst 59 homes had been observed and in Cathedral Park 54 homes, whereas in the Clinton Street area only 26 homes were observed (or approximately half as many homes). As a result, additional blocks were selected for examination within the Clinton Street area to bring the number of houses examined up to 55 for the second round of observation.

The second difficulty arose from the fact that ten streets was not always enough to assure that five streets would be suitable for observation. The number of streets overall needed in order to achieve 5 streets for observation varied significantly by neighborhood. In Laurelhurst, the most strictly residential neighborhood, a total of 10 streets were needed but only because some streets where essentially short through streets and the houses all faced the cross streets. In the Clinton Street area a total of 10 streets were also needed to reach the first five streets examined; in this area streets were unsuitable either because they didn't exist (although shown on the map) or were industrial/commercial. In Cathedral Park a total of 11 streets were needed - so a third sample of 5 streets was selected. In Cathedral Park streets were found unsuitable either because they were basically unpaved alleys with no houses facing the street, were non-existent, or were industrial. This variation in the number of streets needed to reach five streets suitable for observation supports the conclusion from the archival data that

Laurelhurst is the most exclusively residential neighborhood whereas both the Clinton
Street area and Cathedral Park support more mixed uses.

Selection of Preliminary Variables for Observation

Upon completion of street selection, variables were identified which were
expected to vary by house and which were semi-fixed. To repeat, semi-fixed elements
are those over which the house resident had some control, for example these elements
include house color which can be changed relatively easily, but not the number and size
of windows which requires greater cost and effort to change, and thus is less likely to
express characteristics of the owner. These preliminary variables were listed on an
observation sheet and detail such areas as house color, maintenance, landscaping,
idiosyncracies, and size. These elements are what Amos Rapoport (1982b) calls semi-
fixed, and may also more generally be called personalization.

A pilot observation of two streets within a separate neighborhood was
performed in order to field test the observation form and to get a sense of the process so
that greater consistency was achieved for all study observations. This field test resulted
in a few minor changes in the form used for the first observation of homes. The final
version of the form is included as Appendix II.

Observation Process

Each of the homes on the originally selected five streets were observed. The
method used for observation was non-participant, and included sitting in a car parked
along the side of the street observing the nearby homes and marking the characteristics
on the observation form. Often several parking sites were needed to accomplish
complete observation of each street as well as a final drive through to make sure there

were no other characteristics missed because of observation vantage point. Observation occurred for each neighborhood during the day, on both weekdays and weekends. Observation also occurred on both cloudy and sunny days. Neither day of the week or weather affected the variables observed, with the possible exception of cars and other vehicles present.

Upon completion of the first round of observation, the data gathered was reviewed and additional features for observation were identified. Because the study design was exploratory, it was expected that additional variables might arise and existing variables be dropped or refined as knowledge regarding the physical differences between the neighborhoods was gathered. This was in fact the case, necessitating a second round of observations strictly focused on those characteristics that were emerging as relevant. The second round of observations included an additional three streets, to make the number of houses observed in each neighborhood more proportional. The characteristics observed on the second round of observation and their definitions are listed in the following section.

Definition of Observed Characteristics: second round of observations

Each house observed was detailed for the following elements. These elements are semi-fixed (e.g. under residential control but not rapidly changing) and seemed to vary by neighborhood during the initial set of observations. Prior to conducting the observations, the following definitions were developed in order to assure consistency among observations.

Borders. Each home was mapped for the presence of property line indicators (borders). Borders may occur along the sidewalk, on either side of the yard, or between the front edge of the house and the side of the yard. Borders were ranked on

three dimensions as follows: (a) Score - houses received a score ranging from 0 to 3 based on the numbers of borders present. The areas along a front walk or side of the yard count as one each, between the house and side of the yard counts as 0.5; (b) Type - borders were listed by type: chain link fence, vegetation, or other (this grouped category includes wood fences, rock walls, or brick walls; and (c) Real or Symbolic - based on the height of the border and effective blocking of either view or access, borders were rated as either real or symbolic. Retaining walls were included as borders, because often one house would have a retaining wall while the house next door with an equally steeply sloped yard would not.

Vegetation. A mapping was made of vegetation in each yard including grass, other lawn cover, trees, shrubs, and bushes. In addition to type, vegetation was differentiated by the following categories: (a) size -- bushes were marked as small (less than 1.5 feet), medium (1.5 to 4 feet), or large (over 4 feet), trees were marked as small (mature and less than four feet or newly planted and less than 8 feet), medium (4 to 15 feet, excluding newly planted trees), or large (over 15 feet); (b) overall amount -- each yard received a numeric score based on the overall amount of vegetation excluding grass or other ground cover. For example, a yard with grass, two flower beds, three trees and one bush would receive a score of 6.

Upkeep. Each yard received an upkeep score of low, medium, or high. This score was based on a subjective judgement combining complexity of upkeep (e.g. the more items requiring upkeep, the more complex the level of upkeep) and level of upkeep a yard actually received. A yard with several flower beds, all of which had flowers in evidence and were weed free, would receive a high ranking because to keep several flower beds free of weeds requires a high level of upkeep. Conversely, one house had several tiers for flower beds, but all were filled with weeds and the lawn was nearly

dead (a difficult task in Portland's rainy Spring weather); this house received a low rating. A house with only lawn -- of which there were only three in the entire survey -- could receive only a low ranking, no matter how neatly mowed. A lawn, in and of itself, simply does not require much maintenance in a climate where grass, once planted, will maintain itself. A house with a freshly mowed lawn, a Japanese Maple tree, and four rose bushes of uniform height would receive a medium ranking. A high score was achieved if a house either had a large number of vegetation requiring medium maintenance or a medium number of vegetation which required high maintenance (such as sharply edged, weed-free beds of annual flowers or obviously pruned bushes).

Seating. The presence of outdoor seating was noted for each home. Seating was not differentiated by type.

Symmetry. Symmetry refers to yards with the same or similar vegetation (in type and size) reflected on either both sides of the yard, both sides of the front walk, or along the front of the house. Each yard was given a score ranging from 0 to 3 based on the number of areas demonstrating symmetry.

Pruning. Pruning refers to bushes which have been pruned into rectangular or square shape.

House Color/Trim Contrast. This category involved the somewhat subjective judgement of contrast between the main house color and the color(s) used for trim. Contrast was rated as none, low, medium, or high. Examples of each category include high: a white home with black trim; medium: a medium blue house with white trim; low: a light yellow house with slightly darker yellow trim; and none: a white house with the same color white trim.

House Color. The colors of each house were noted using broad categories. Beige, cream, and off-white were all grouped under the category "off-white". The

range of pink and purple colors were grouped with orange and burgundy in the category "purple." The color categories used included: blue, brick (unpainted), brown, green, grey, off-white, purple, red, white, wood (natural colors), yellow, and multicolored (in which two colors were used about evenly on the house).

Each street was mapped, by home and by the characteristics listed above. These results were then tallied by neighborhood, and combined with results from the first set of observations regarding presence of cars and the number of stories for each home.

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS: DIFFERENCES DISPLAYED BY NEIGHBORHOODS

This chapter is divided into three subsections. The first subsection centers on three indexical signs which are common among neighborhoods and which perhaps have the clearest meaning: methods of demarcating property lines, vegetation, and vehicles present. The second subsection looks at differences in the type of signifier used in those three signs. The third subsection details those results which were inconclusive.

All results are provided as narrative descriptions or as descriptive statistics. No attempt has been made to run statistical significance tests. Description rather than significance is at issue because these three neighborhoods have been investigated as a case study of potential differences found between neighborhoods rather than as generalizable 'truths' about neighborhood differences which would require significance tests.

Indexical Signs, Similar by Neighborhood

Indexical signs were found in three main areas: property line indicators, vegetation, and motor vehicles. Each of these is discussed below, along with suggested messages conveyed by the signs.

Property Line Indicators (Borders) and Privacy/Individualism

Property line indicators include any physical element used to demarcate the edges of a property. Such borders may include a chain link or wood fence, or a fairly continuous row of flowers or bushes. The percentage of homes using borders was similar for each neighborhood.

Table 3

<u>Borders by Neighborhood</u>

	Total # and % of houses with borders	Average Border Score
Laurelhurst	33 (56%)	1.3
Clinton Street area	25 (45.5%)	1.8
Cathedral Park	32 (59.3%)	1.6

In all neighborhoods, roughly half of the houses have borders (between 45 and 59 per cent). The Clinton Street neighborhood is least likely to have borders, however those houses which do have borders have borders around more sides of the house (border score).

Fences and other forms of borders between property (including such symbolic borders as a line of flowers) are used to signal the distinction of one's own property, privacy, and individualism. Amos Rapoport in 1969 noted an increase in fence popularity and sales and suggests that this change is "due to an identification of fences with privacy -- and privacy is becoming a status symbol" (1969, p. 134). Rapoport later finds fences to communicate "self-sufficiency, individualism, and nonconformity" (1982b, p. 130). A study by Brower, Dockett, and Taylor (1983) found that plantings and fences as borders make back yards look more like private property; the same presumably holds true for front yards. The relationship between the signifier and signified is indexical in that such property line indicators block access to the property -- even if that access is as easy to circumvent as stepping over a flower bed. (Of course, the idea that one steps over flower beds rather than, say, to use them as a pathway is

also in some senses arbitrary and culturally defined). Thus borders are an indexical sign conveying the message of private property, privacy, and individualism.

Vegetation, House Facade Maintenance, and Neighboring

Vegetation, beyond simple grass lawns, was nearly ubiquitous in all neighborhoods. Such vegetation may range from a single tree or bush to intricate flower beds and repeating patterns of bushes. The percentage of lots with vegetation beyond grass lawns ranged from 96 per cent to 100 per cent (highest in Laurelhurst, lowest in Cathedral Park). In all neighborhoods, the house facades were well maintained. In approximately one or two houses in each neighborhood either paint was peeling or some area at the base of the house showed green traces of mold. With these few exceptions, nearly all the homes (above 95%) demonstrated good maintenance. A few homes were clearly under renovation, either being painted, showing plywood , or having a large pile of dirt out front to be used for gardening. Because visits to the neighborhood were not made over a long period of time, I assumed that these home upkeep projects were going to be completed soon rather than representing a relatively permanent state. For example, I assumed the pile of gardening dirt would be made use of and disappear within a couple weeks, rather than sitting as a big pile of dirt over several years.

The connection between vegetation, house facade maintenance, and neighboring is based on Mike Greenberg's (1995) description of neighborhoods as gift communities. Gift communities are streets where homes and front lawns present a well maintained aspect to the street. Because one looks out from one's house at neighbors rather than at one's own front lawn (at least in most urban neighborhoods with smaller front lawns), the care the neighbors take of their house and lawn is a gift to

one. In a gift community, "you take better care of the lawn, you keep the stucco patched and the walls neatly painted. And if most of your neighbors take care of their property in this way, they establish a neighborhood ethos, a habit that tends to rub off on you" (Greenberg, 1995, pp. 19-20). Greenberg draws out the argument to express benefits extending beyond maintaining resale value which occur when all neighbors take part in the gift community. Such benefits include aesthetic pleasure, security, and increased social order. If we live in a gift community, "we continually exchange gifts with each other, are bound to each other, even if we never speak" (Greenberg, 1995, p. 19). Perhaps one of the clearest examples of the front of the house and the front lawn acting as gifts is found in one of the houses with peeling paint. Both the front of the house and the side of the house facing a cross street were neatly painted. However, the side of the house not facing a street was a different color and the paint peeling badly.

The idea of a gift community as shown by lawns and home fronts is a visual representation of neighboring, of interacting on a friendly basis with one's neighbors. The maintaining of a lawn and the addition of decorative trees, flowers, and shrubbery represents effort spent on one's lawn and, in the framework of a gift community, represents a gift to one's neighbors.

Houses, Cars, and Financial Status

In the signs described below, the significance is drawn not so much from the similarity between neighborhoods as in the differences between them. The neighborhoods were similar, and similar to most urban, single family home neighborhoods in the U.S. in that numerous cars were present and houses, although varying by size and style, were of the wood-frame variety rather than created using mud, grass, or other means. However, important differences also existed, based on

house size and vehicle type related to purchase price. The most obvious indicators of wealth are those which require a large amount of money to acquire.

In a strict neighborhood to neighborhood comparison, Laurelhurst residents demonstrated the most wealth, clearly surrounded by the most large, two-story homes and mid- to upper-end cars. Not all these expensive cars are new: one driveway housed a 1970s Volvo. House size and car type can be considered signifiers of wealth. One is not forced to purchase the most expensive car and house that one can afford. Therefore the choice to purchase expensive ones can be seen as used to mark status, or that displaying such status is important to residents of a neighborhood with a reputation for wealth. These signs are indexical in that, although more money does not require purchase of a more expensive car or house, more money is necessary to make that more expensive purchase.

These three messages, privacy/individualism, neighboring, and financial status, are conveyed in each neighborhood. These signs can be considered indexical because something about the sign relates to something in the physical world. However, within each general indexical sign are possibilities for differences in form. These differences in form are largely symbolic: the meaning is socially negotiated and arbitrary to a greater degree than the indexical signs discussed above. It is how the messages are conveyed that create and demonstrate neighborhood character.

Symbolic and Indexical Signs, Varying by Neighborhood

This section explores symbolic and indexical signs which vary by neighborhood.These signs are related to the indexical signs described above.

Vehicle Type. Within each neighborhood, a range of vehicle types was present, from less to more expensive. Low to mid-range priced two and four door cars were

present in each neighborhood. Laurelhurst was more likely to have brands of cars which are more expensive. The Clinton Street area and Cathedral Park are more likely to have full-size trucks. And Cathedral Park was the only neighborhood in which I saw recreation vehicles (RVs) as well as the extra-large sized garages necessary to encompass such a large vehicle. Assuming that in each neighborhood, residents have a range of incomes, those in each neighborhood who both can and choose to purchase expensive vehicles make different choices than do the similar residents of the other neighborhoods.

In terms of demonstrating wealth, or disposable income available to be spent on vehicles, the expense of the vehicle is indexical, whereas the type of vehicle doesn't matter. However, in demonstrating identification with a particular cultural group, the type of vehicle also functions as an indexical sign. Full size trucks are designed to be able to haul heavy or large items much more readily than cars. By owning a truck, one gains that ability. I would argue that trucks then signify independence and manual labor. Trucks seem to be part of an entire code centered on self-sufficiency, along with similar items such as cutting and bringing home enough firewood to heat one's home for the winter, hunting and providing oneself with food, or with bringing that new sofa home from the store yourself rather than paying the $40 delivery fee. The more frequent presence of trucks then seems to fit with the self-sufficient and independent reputation of Cathedral Park residents, if not as clearly so for the reputation of those in the Clinton Street area. Recreation vehicles also have a 'motivated' relationship with self-sufficiency in terms of vacationing, without needing to rely on mass transit such as airplanes, or on the presence of lodging and food.

Size of Vegetation. The size of vegetation varied by neighborhood. Although all neighborhoods had nearly universal presence of vegetation in addition to grass lawns,

Laurelhurst had the most frequent incidence of large vegetation. The following chart summarizes the comparison data for all three neighborhoods:

Table 4

Large Vegetation by Neighborhood

	Total # of large trees and bushes	Percent of lots with large vegetation	Average number of large trees/bushes on those lots with large vegetation
Laurelhurst	75	64%	2
Clinton Street area	54	49%	2
Cathedral Park	31	43%	1.3

The difference in amount of large vegetation is interesting because all three neighborhoods are about the same age, and at least three-quarters of a century old and therefore should have had the same length of time for vegetation to grow large. Large vegetation may thus have an indexical relationship with stability. Laurelhurst had the highest proportion of residents who lived in the same house five years ago which seems to demonstrate stability and stability or continuity of owners may be necessary for bushes and trees to receive proper care to grow large, as well as to not be torn out by new owners wanting change.

In addition to stability, large vegetation seems to function as a symbolic sign of wealth. Two of the studies cited in the literature review section of this paper found that higher income correlated with overgrown vegetation (Rapoport, 1982b; Duncan, 1973).

Overall Amount of Vegetation. Here, we return to the idea of the gift community and additional vegetation by lot. Laurelhurst showed a clear lead in the overall number of vegetation (excluding grass or alternative groundcover). Not only did

every lot have additional landscaping, but the average number of plants per yard was
higher in Laurelhurst:

Table 5

Vegetation by Neighborhood

	Percent of lots with vegetation	Total # of trees, bushes, and flowers	Average # of vegetation per lot	Percent of lots with flowers
Laurelhurst	100%	444	7.5	72.8%
Clinton Street area	98%	316	5.7	54.5%
Cathedral Park	96%	298	5.5	44.4%

That additional vegetation would signify wealth forms an indexical relationship because
flowers, bushes, and trees take money to purchase and to upkeep, including either
enough money to hire a landscaper or enough leisure time to perform yardwork. These
descriptive statistics would also tend to suggest that Laurelhurst is also more of a "gift
community", with residents more concerned with neighborhood relationships, than the
other two neighborhoods based on the average amount of vegetation per lot and on the
presence of flowers (a higher upkeep type of vegetation than bushes or trees). The
accuracy of the statement that Laurelhurst is more of a neighboring type of
neighborhood depends on the equation that more vegetation equals more gift.

Border Types. Among types of borders, there is clear differentiation by
neighborhood. Residents of Cathedral Park are most likely to use chain link fences as
borders. Residents of the Clinton Street area are most likely to use wood, rocks, or
bricks as borders. Those in Laurelhurst tend to use vegetation to mark property lines.

Table 6

Types of Borders by Neighborhood

	Chain Link Fence	Wood, rock, or brick fence or retaining wall	Vegetation: bushes, hedges, flowers
Laurelhurst	8.5%	22.9%	68.6%
Clinton Street area	24%	44%	32%
Cathedral Park	37.5%	28.1%	37.5%

In all three neighborhoods, residents are most likely to use symbolic borders to mark property rather than actual borders physically capable of keeping people out. However, Laurelhurst is about half as likely than either of the other two neighborhoods to use a real border.

Table 7

Functionality of Borders: Real v. Symbolic by Neighborhood

	Border is real, blocks access/view	Border is symbolic
Laurelhurst	17%	83%
Clinton Street area	34.6%	65.4%
Cathedral Park	37.5%	62.5%

In the above section, borders were seen as an indexical sign of privacy and independence. In each neighborhood roughly half of the houses had borders around all or a portion of the front lawn. The difference in type of border predominantly found in each neighborhood seems to be a symbolic sign, signifying the differences in neighborhood character, rather than indexically motivated. Chain link fences are not more effective at keeping intruders out than are hedges or wood fences (as compared to the difference between real and symbolic borders), chain link fences are easier to see through than bushes or wood, and take little less upkeep than an established hedge or wood fence, thus it seems to be a symbolic relationship rather than one related to actual function. Chain link and wood fences can be equally effective at keeping dogs inside the yard (although both are likely more effective than a hedge) again suggesting a symbolic difference between the two. The use of vegetation as a border, however, may relate back to the prevalence of gift community vegetation in the Laurelhurst neighborhood. The use of wood, rock or brick (e.g. natural materials, but ones which take less upkeep than vegetation) also seems to have symbolic meaning rather than to be indexically related to a transitional or a "hip" neighborhood character.

Cathedral Park residents most frequently use real borders to demonstrate privacy and independence, followed closely by Clinton Street area residents. In addition, to return to the total per cent of houses with borders by neighborhood, Cathedral Park homes were the most likely to have borders (15% higher than in the Clinton Street area). The functionality of borders seems to be a indexical sign, with the neighborhood most reputed for self-sufficiency and independence also most likely to use a real border that assures separation of one's own property from the surroundings. Use of symbolic borders may also signify an assurance that one's borders or one's property will be respected by others.

Upkeep. Each lot was rated either high, medium, or low based on the amount of care required to keep the landscaping alive and weed-free and whether or not that care was received. The following chart summarizes the percent of houses receiving high, medium and low scores in each neighborhood:

Table 8

Level of Landscape Upkeep

	high	medium	low
Laurelhurst	44.1%	47.5%	8.5%
Clinton Street area	25.5%	41.8%	32.7%
Cathedral Park	16.7%	50%	33.3%

Laurelhurst clearly has the most houses with landscaping requiring, and receiving, a high level of upkeep. Laurelhurst also had the fewest lots receiving a low rating. The Clinton Street area, in a pattern also followed for the number of large vegetation and overall vegetation, ranks slightly higher than Cathedral Park, especially when comparing the number of lots receiving a high level of upkeep. The modal category for all three areas was medium, with between approximately 42% to 50% of lots receiving this level of care. The differences then, are the result of the number of high or low end lots rather than from a difference in the number of "average" or medium upkeep lots. The message conveyed by upkeep is here related to the idea of a gift community, with its more frequent vegetation (thus enabling a higher level of upkeep) and in general terms of upkeep signifying care of the surroundings visible to others.

Seating. The presence of benches, chairs or porch swings was noted for each house. This observation was made with the idea that those people most likely to know

and interact with their neighbors were also most likely to sit outside in their front yards and porches. A total of 18 homes in Laurelhurst had visible seating, and 12 homes in Cathedral Park. However, only six homes in the Clinton Street area had any sort of outdoor seating present. This pattern follows other indicators of the gift community as indicative of neighboring, including the presence of landscaping and flowers.

Inconclusive Results

Several semi-fixed elements were observed which were expected to convey a message of conventionality. These elements including pruning of bushes, symmetry of plantings in the front lawn, house color and the contrast between house to trim colors. A brief explanation of the proposed indexical relationship and the actual observed results follows.

Symmetry. Symmetry refers to yards with the same or similar vegetation (in type and size) reflected on either both sides of the yard, both sides of the front walk, or along the front of the house. Each yard was given a score ranging from 0 to 3 based on the number of areas demonstrating symmetry. Symmetry was suggested to convey conventionality , based on the idea that symmetry is a more formal or established pattern of landscaping. The Clinton Street area actually showed the most yards with symmetry suggesting that conventionality does not necessarily tie to symmetry in vegetation. The data regarding symmetry are summarized in the table below:

Table 9

Symmetry by Neighborhood

	Total # of yards with symmetry	Average symmetry score for yards with symmetry
Laurelhurst	21 (35.6%)	1.38
Clinton Street area	20 (36.4%)	1.15
Cathedral Park	14 (25.9%)	1.14

The Laurelhurst neighborhood does show a higher symmetry score for those yards which demonstrate any symmetry, however because the Laurelhurst neighborhood does not have a reputation as more conventional than Cathedral Park, one must assume that these differences do not reflect conventionality.

Pruning. Pruning refers to bushes which have been pruned into rectangular or square shapes. Again no significant variation between neighborhoods was found. Laurelhurst and Cathedral Park do come in higher than the Clinton Street area, but not by a substantial amount in terms of the percentage of yards with sharply pruned bushes: Laurelhurst, 20%; the Clinton Street area, 15%; and Cathedral Park, 19%.

Internal Neighborhood Variation: a Possible Explanation. Both the Laurelhurst and Cathedral Park neighborhoods were fairly internally consistent in terms of the variables examined so far: all streets observed had a fairly similar look. However, one of the streets examined in the Clinton Street area neighborhood had more formal landscaping and had larger houses than the other streets in that neighborhood. If this street is not included in the data then the proposed tie between symmetry and conventionality begins to emerge (e.g. if we allow for the moment that street with larger

houses and more landscaping is more conventional and wealthy and thus does not "fit" the neighborhood character). The following data then emerges:

Table 10

Symmetry by Neighborhood, Adjusted

	Total # of yards with symmetry	Average symmetry score for yards with symmetry	% of yards with sharply pruned bushes
Laurelhurst	21 (35.6%)	1.38	20%
Clinton Street area	15 (34.9%)	1.13	7%
Cathedral Park	14 (25.9%)	1.14	19%

This data does not change substantially for symmetry, but does show a sharp drop in the amount of pruning observed. This suggests that while symmetry does not indicate conventionality, pruning might.

Contrast Between House and Trim Colors. Houses may show a contrast between the main house color and trim colors. This contrast was listed as high, medium, low, or none (for a more complete description see Chapter V: Methodology). I hypothesized that houses with a high contrast between the house color and trim would represent low conventionality, based on the idea that such houses stand out from the norm and are not attempting to 'fit in' with other nearby houses. In such a case, the Clinton Street area neighborhood would have the greatest number of houses with high contrast between house color and trim color. As the following table shows, this was not the case.

Table 11

House and Trim Color Contrast

	high	medium	low	none
Laurelhurst	28.8%	28.8%	28.8%	13.5%
Clinton Street area	12.7%	43.6%	36.4%	7.3%
Cathedral Park	16.7%	29.6%	44.4%	9.3%

Homes in the Laurelhurst neighborhood stand out for having the most high and no contrast paint jobs. The Clinton Street area homes had the least number of high and no contrast colors, however these are only a few percentage points different from Cathedral Park. Cathedral Park as the most conventional neighborhood does have the greatest number of low contrast houses, and of low and no contrast houses grouped together.

House Colors. I had hypothesized that house color would follow conventionality of the neighborhood, with less conventional houses painted in less conventional colors such as pink or purple. However, this relationship was not found in the data. All three neighborhoods had either 5% or 6% of houses with pink/peach/purple main house color. The most significant differences were for white houses with a 10% difference between neighborhoods (Laurelhurst 26% white houses v. 20% in Cathedral Park and 16% in the Clinton Street area) and for yellow houses with a 10% difference between neighborhoods (Cathedral Park had 18% yellow houses v. 9% in the Clinton Street area and 8% in Laurelhurst). In all three neighborhoods the most common house color was white. (The Clinton Street area actually had three colors tie for most common: blue, grey, and white.)

Trim color showed even less variation than house color. White was again the most favored color (between 44% and 50% of houses in each neighborhood had white trim). The second most favored color was blue (between 10 and 13%). The greatest difference was to be found in the number of houses with two or more trim colors. In Laurelhurst 20% of houses had two colors of trim, compared to 13% in the Clinton Street area and 10% in Cathedral Park.

If house color and trim color are symbolic or indexical signs, they do not seem to relate to conventionality. No other clear relationship seems to emerge from the data. Summary percentages for house color and trim color are available in Appendix III.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This study provides a preliminary exploration of the meanings conveyed by differences in the urban landscape. These differences were examined on a neighborhood wide level, and considered in conjunction with demographic and reputational differences between the neighborhoods.

The basis for the paper is reflected in several underlying assumptions. Neighborhoods may be made up of residents all speaking the same message, such as exclusivity or independence; these neighborhoods give coherent messages and have strong identifiable character. Other neighborhoods may seem fragmented or have unclear character because the residential make-up is changing over time. Residents reflect aspects of themselves through the physical surroundings that make up a neighborhood. One's values, lifestyles, and financial status all affect the choices one makes in home purchases and later choices in landscaping and home presentation. The choices one makes about one's surroundings reflect one's tastes, which in turn are a reflection of who one is. Reversed, this statement suggests that we can learn a great deal about a person by their surroundings. And since people cluster in neighborhoods with others of similar characteristics, the neighborhood as a whole takes on the character of its residents.

This study examined three neighborhoods in a preliminary effort to identify which characteristics demonstrate neighborhood character. The neighborhoods chosen varied in character, and included one wealthy, relatively liberal neighborhood, one working class Democratic neighborhood, and one neighborhood in transition.

The research was performed in a qualitative manner, allowing the characteristics that varied by neighborhood to emerge through repeated observation. As such, this study acts more as a case study of three neighborhoods with their character and composite elements than as a demonstration of generalizable fact across all places and times. The character of these neighborhoods was established using archival data, including newspaper articles and 1990 U.S. Census data, and by cataloguing the types and mix of non-residential uses within the neighborhood. Field research was used to catalogue house-front and landscape elements by neighborhood. Within each neighborhood a random sample of streets was selected, totaling at least 50 houses observed per neighborhood. In addition, the neighborhood as a whole was driven through to form an overall impression of residential areas and mix of uses.

The elements examined in the environment were all semi-fixed features, or features which can be changed but tend to remain stable over time. These elements were chosen because they are variable enough that the residents have some control over them while also stable enough to convey a continuous message. The elements examined include property line indicators (borders), vegetation, vehicles, landscaping, seating, and house colors. Aspects of these elements, such as frequency or type, provided the bulk of differences found between neighborhoods. The observations, connected with the archival findings on the character of the neighborhoods culminate in an interpretation of neighborhood character as manifested in these three neighborhoods. The differences between neighborhoods are interpreted to reflect differences in socio-economic status, concerns regarding privacy, and the importance of neighboring.

The analysis of data uses a semiotic framework, considering the semi-fixed elements observed as signs, both indexical and symbolic, that signify meanings. These signs are broken down into three types: wealth, privacy, and neighboring. Results

indicated that in the wealthier neighborhood one is more likely to see expensive passenger cars, large vegetation, extensively landscaped lawns, and property line borders formed of flowers, shrubs or trees. In the working-class neighborhood, Recreational Vehicles (RVs) and chain link fences were more common, along with a medium amount of landscaping. In the neighborhood in transition, yards were less likely to contain extensive landscaping, and borders used tended to be of wood or stone. An indexical reading of these signs suggests that they relate to messages regarding wealth, neighboring, and privacy. In addition, these elements taken together may form codes which signify wealth (expensive cars, large and extensive vegetation, natural borders), and working class status (RVs, full-size trucks, a medium amount of landscaping, and chain-link fences). The transitional neighborhood did not seem to convey a coherent message regarding neighborhood residential identity (other than perhaps that the neighborhood was experiencing turnover and transition). Clear differences were not found between the neighborhoods in those signs which were expected to reflect attitudes regarding conventionality.

The results of this paper provide a basis for additional work, both to examine other neighborhoods to see if similar patterns are found in similar neighborhoods and in identification of additional signs used to convey messages about residential status and neighborhood character. By understanding physical aspects that make up neighborhood character, we become better able to understand the neighborhoods which make up our cities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Non-Residential Activities within Each Neighborhood

Hosford-Abernathy: excluding two major commercial streets with many businesses

Industrial: Division Carpet & Upholstery Cleaning Supply; Greenhouse Lighting & Supplies; H.B.A.; Precision Pattern Works ; Dusdero Lumber; Salem Installation Supplies; Certified Welding; Pacific Sunrise Construction; Trade Printing; Royal Commercial Equipment; United Industries Transpacific Industries ; K&F Select Coffees warehouse; Masons Supply Co.

Commercial: Mama Marinas Italian Restaurant; McDonalds (the only one in all 3 neighborhoods); Pink Lady Beauty Salon - in home; resale shops (2); Dots Restaurant; Local Boyz Hawaiian Restaurant; Coffee Shop; New Age Health Complex (midwife, counseling, "active well being clinic"); antique store; Mexican restaurant; bar; record store; junk dealer; People's Food Coop; "roofers and water proofers"; Millennium Cafe (with computer terminals inside); Food Value Grocery and a combined laundry/tanning/yogurt/cleaners; Reeds Electric Co; Miller Moodenbaugh Reporting Associates (in a home); small grocery; a commercial building for sale; Electric Motors - sales and repairs; Rapid Binding Inc

Other: High School; Middle School; Piccolo Park (1/2 block or so); Adult Foster Care; Clinton Street Theatre; religious house (a hospice? there's a religious symbol hung over the door and all the window shutters have turquoise crosses painted on them); Disability Service; community garden; Vietnamese church and social services; Buddhist Temple

Cathedral Park: excluding industrial strip along river

Industrial: Columbia Sportswear

Commercial: B Mart grocery; restaurant; Letson Garage; Your Inn Tavern; Portway Tavern; offices

Other: Mission/Church; Legacy Health Clinic; Bahai Center; fire station; Schrunk River Place Tower - retirement home; fraternal order building; Post Office; Love Temple Club; water towers; Cathedral Park (extending to river); community garden; Open Meadow Learning Center (gang rehabilitation home/half way house)

Laurelhurst: excluding few blocks of commercial street in corner of neighborhood

Industrial: none

Commercial: none

Other: church; church; church; church; school; traffic circle; park

Appendix II: Observation Form for First Round of Observations

Observation Sheet

Address: _____ Day and Time Observing _____

First Impression/What Stands Out/who lives here and why?		
House	Building Material	
	Main Color	Trim:
	# Stories (by 1/2 stories)	
	Complexity of Shape:	
	Window projections & covering (open/closed):	
	Footprint	
	Idiosyncracies	
	Porch	
	Full / 1/2 length of house / Stoop / Covered	
	Seating: Built in / Moveable	
	Garage - # cars: Attached / Detached	
	Front / side / alley / none / other	
Yard	Landscaping Impression: formal/informal, other. Why?	
	# trees	# bushes
	Grass or other (describe)	
	Neatness of yard/level of maint. needed?	
	Tidy / yard debris / toys / lawn seating / bicycles / other	
	Quality of Pruning: overgrown / pruned / formal flowerbeds	
	Sidewalk	
	Maintained (cleaned/edged/overgrown)	
	Planting in setback?	On street / setback
	Driveway: in yard: y / n	
	Vehicles occupying (functional?):	
	Secondary Building	

Appendix III: House Colors and Trim Colors

House Colors

	Laurelhurst	Clinton Street area	Cathedral Park
Two Colors	2%	0%	2%
Blue	15%	16%	14%
Brick	2%	2%	4%
Brown	8%	9%	10%
Green	11%	9%	6%
Grey	13%	16%	8%
Off-White	13%	15%	10%
Pink/Orange/Purple	5%	5%	6%
Red	2%	2%	2%
White	26%	16%	20%
Wood	0%	0%	2%
Yellow	5%	9%	18%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Trim Colors

	Laurelhurst	Clinton Street area	Cathedral Park
Two Colors	20%	13%	10%
Blue	11%	10%	13%
Brick	1%	3%	0%
Brown	9%	10%	5%
Green	8%	8%	12%
Grey	8%	8%	2%
Off-White	3%	5%	5%
Pink/Orange/Purple	7%	3%	5%
Red	4%	5%	0%
White	46%	44%	50%
Yellow	1%	3%	7%
Black	3%	0%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%